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Lucia A Keegan 09/06/2006 02:43:39 PM From DB/Inbox: Lucia A Keegan

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INFO: AMB ARS DCM POL

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Mexico - Aftermath of Elections
Iran - Islam - Greater Middle East
PARIS - Wednesday, September 06, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Mexico - Aftermath of Elections
Iran - Islam - Greater Middle East

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Domestic stories - the controversial merger between GDF (France's gas utility national company) and Suez, and the battles within the Socialist Party for the Presidential election nomination - lead today's news. Popular Le Parisien carries an interview of former Socialist PM Lionel Jospin, who, according to the interviewer, "entertains the suspense about his possible candidacy. But everything points to his leading the Socialists in the battle for the 2007 presidential elections."

Afternoon paper Le Monde stands apart with the headline "Blockade:

Lebanon Asks for UN Intervention." This morning's radio commentaries reporting on Kofi Annan's intervention said the "blockade could well be lifted in the next couple of days." Le Figaro in its inside story announces that "France Will Be Guarding the Lebanese Coasts" to help speed up the lifting of the blockade. Liberation reports that "Kofi Annan Has Announced the End of the Blockade" and that "a mediator will facilitate the exchange of prisoners between Israel and Hezbollah." TF1 and FR2 noted that Chirac has deployed a fleet to the Lebanese coasts to prevent Hezbollah from receiving weapons. FR2 said that this is "a crucial mission because enforcing the arms embargo is one of Israel's conditions for lifting the blockade."

All outlets report that the Turkish Parliament has ratified the sending of troops to Lebanon. FR2 noted that it is the "the second Muslim country to join UNIFIL."

An analysis in Le Figaro claims that "with its deployment, (of the largest UNIFIL troop contingent) Prodi's Italy has imposed itself in Europe."

London's concerns about its "multiculturalism" are a major story in Le Figaro. Laure Mandeville analyzes the aftershock of the foiled terrorist plans against airliners and the implication of native born British subjects involved in the plot, as well as "the discomfort felt by British Muslims with regard to London's policy of ethnic diversity." An op-ed also in Le Figaro is entitled "Islamism: A New Totalitarianism." In Liberation Semih Vaner, a researcher at Ceric pens an op-ed on the complicated Middle East, "where the deposing of Saddam Hussein has opened up an unprecedented era of interaction." (See Part C)

Le Figaro, Liberation and FR2 quote President Bush's speech yesterday in which he called Iran's Ahmadinejad a 'tyrant.' FR2 reported that "the pitch of the rhetoric was going up a notch between the U.S. and Iran." Daniel Vernet in Le Monde analyzes "Chirac's Diplomacy" and laments that vis-à-vis Iran the P5+1's "carrot is less and less appetizing and the stick is less and less credible" for Teheran. (See Part C)

Trial lawyer Pierre-Olivier Sur's op-ed in Le Figaro on the "failed" French penal system warns against copying the American model, which he calls an "anti-model." "This is a model of death penalty... a model where a man can be convicted to over one hundred years of imprisonment... including business men, as in the Enron case. A model where rich and poor are treated differently because of plea bargaining... A model that is a source of shame from Guantanamo to the phantom prisons of Europe, and which has led to the non-ratification of the ICC treaty."

The editorial in Le Figaro, devoted to the aftermath of the Mexican elections, is entitled "In Mexico, Democracy in Danger." (See Part C)

Other international news includes the EU Parliament's request that Ankara recognize the Armenian genocide. Alexandrine Bouilhet writes in Le Figaro: "The amendment can still be rejected according to the more liberal Parliamentarians who are in favor of Turkey's EU membership. And while the Armenian issue is unanimously supported by France, in other European countries it is a cause for dissension."

La Croix devotes its lead story to bio-fuels and the question of the day to the Chikungunya and the chances for its return in the island of La Reunion. Liberation reports on Minister Francois Baroin's trip to La Reunion where he is quoted as saying: "Its return is inevitable." The article concludes: "Hopes for an effective vaccine rely entirely on American researchers."

Economic news is topped by the OECD's figures for economic growth. Le Figaro Economie headlines: "Growth for 2006: 2.7% for Europe; 5% for the World." A separate article indicates that France, "thanks to restructuring, has moved up from 47th to 35th in the World Bank's yearly classification of country's facilitating business enterprise." Singapore is ranked first, the U.S. third.

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Mexico - Aftermath of Elections

"Mexican Democracy In Danger"

Pierre Roussel in right-of-center *Le Figaro* (09/06): "With a very short margin, Calderon is going to inherit a nation more divided than ever with protests which may undermine the country's stability... Obrador speaks of a fraud which has yet to be proven... and threatens to create a parallel government... For the time being the outgoing government has avoided falling into the trap set by Obrador's provocations... The Mayor of the Mexican capital is hoping to awaken the old demons of political violence as part of his insurrectional strategy. Mexico, which aspires to be a modern nation, deserves better than this anti-democratic movement and this contempt for the right of law... Obrador's anachronistic activism is emblematic of the Latin American continent's populist trend. The Mexican crisis challenges the entire continent... Calderon's task, with only 38% of voter support, is immense."

Iran- Islam - Greater Middle East

"Chirac and Multilateralism"

Daniel Vernet in left-of-center *Le Monde* (09/06): "In the negotiations with Iran, the carrot being offered by the P5+1 is less and less appetizing for Tehran and the stick less and less credible. This is no doubt a great disappointment for Chirac, champion of multipolarity... While Jacques Chirac no longer openly criticizes George W. Bush's foreign policy, he implicitly targeted the U.S. President when he deplored a 'world order that tolerates injustice'... or when he rejected the idea of a two-fold enlargement of NATO to be discussed at the Riga Summit... But in the Middle East, neither French-sponsored multilateralism nor American unilateralism has been successful."

"Islamism: A New Totalitarianism."

Essayist Thierry Wolton in right-of-center *Le Figaro* (09/06): "There is a difference between dictatorships, which are imposed on a people and totalitarian Islamism which is an ideology shared by an entire nation... The aim for Islamism is to build a Utopia based on the infallibility of said ideology, in this case the Koran... Islam becomes state, family, ethics: a system adopted by today's terrorists to shed blood around the world."

"An Intricate Middle East"

Semih Vaner, a researcher at Ceri in left-of-center *Liberation* (09/06): "The deposing of Saddam Hussein has opened up an unprecedented era of intricate interaction in the Middle East... The tectonic movements in this region have never been greater. Policy here is made up not just by the politicians and the diplomats, but by tribes and ethnic groups... Even if the American administration were truly concerned about promoting democracy in what it calls the Greater Middle East, why then include Turkey, one of the most democratic states of the region, in the GME? This geo-strategic subdivision corresponds to America's own strategic interests in the region... But Turkey, despite the umbrella protection of NATO, is necessarily threatened by its neighbor's nuclear ambitions. Iran is indeed another major power with feet of clay... Tehran's messianic message does not mean the regime is not realistic. Its desire to arm itself is a response to its own desire for regional influence, but it is also a defensive necessity against the American threat, which rightly or not, is perceived as real. One cannot be treated as a 'rogue state' and not react." STAPLETON